COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
DEPARTAMENT OF EDUCATION
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES PROGRAM

LSTA FIVE YEAR PLAN
2003-2007

Submitted to the
Institute of Museum and Library Services

Introduction

According to an estimate made by the US Census in 1998, 61% of the 821,957 Puerto Rican minors were under poverty levels, that is 498,937 children, between the ages 5-17 lived in poverty. The US Census has established that a family is below poverty levels if its income is less than $4, 500.00 annually.[1] The high number of children trapped in poverty levels is appalling and it affects all aspects and the quality of life of these children. Socioeconomic condition affects school performance, is directly correlated to the high number of school dropouts and responsible for the violence that has sprawled throughout the public school system in the past years.

The 2000 US Census estimated that 58 % of all Puertorricans are under poverty levels. Under these circumstances most people cannot buy books, neither they have computers, and their probabilities of having and using them is none.

Families socioeconomic conditions affect the way children learn and perform in schools. Since 1996 the Department of Education has administered basic skill test (Spanish, English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies)[2] for third, sixth, ninth and eleventh grade students. Improvement of academic skills has gained several points over the years, but it is still of great concern for educators. Sixth graders have consistently shown lower test scores than other grades and are at a greater risk of dropping out of the system.

A recent Texas study has shown that good school libraries lead to higher scores on the reading portion of the state's basic skills test.[3] A researcher's findings in other states like Colorado, Alaska and Pennsylvania have shown a strong correlation between school

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[1] El Nuevo Día, 14 de Octubre de 2001.
[2] Pruebas Puertorriqueñas de Competencias Escolares.

libraries and student achievement of standardized tests. Even though the main predictors of student performance on those tests were socioeconomic conditions, libraries and library characteristics (collaboration with teachers and library resources) had a great influence on test scores.

Library and Information Services Program

The Library and Information Services Program (LISP) of the Department of Education in Puerto Rico provides personnel, resources, services, and guidance in the development of library programs and services to school, public and community libraries in Puerto Rico.

As the State Library Administrative Agency (SLAA) LISP has the responsibility for the distribution of the funds allocated to all libraries that requests and complies with LSTA purposes and the goals established in this proposal.

This proposal to the Institute of Museum and Library Services will allow the empowerment of school libraries, public libraries, community and all other libraries offerings for children, young adults, and adults through the development of programs with the acquisition of technology, updated library book collections, and the education and training of staff personnel in order to offer quality services to users.

The funding for this proposal will enable participant libraries to attract a larger amount of users thus helping them become lifelong learners and an example for others to follow. Professional educated staff will be more competent and provide quality services that will make a difference to all library users.

Grant will be used to support island wide initiatives and services and through subgrant competitions to public and school libraries, communities and special libraries.

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[3] School Library Journal, September 2001.

On September 2001, LISP conducted an island wide study of the needs of the school and public libraries. Recently, a group of stakeholders representing library patrons, institutional libraries, public libraries, community libraries, the Regional Library for the Blind and Physical Impaired, and SLAA administrative level, met to work a needs assessment program, mission, plans and policies to be implemented on a five year program. Needs, consistent with LSTA purposes, were widely discussed and five were chosen to be included in the Five Year Plan:

1. Cultural values of the community can be effectively served through a vigorous library program.

2. Promote targeted library and information services to underserved urban and rural communities, including senior citizens and children, from families with incomes below poverty line.

3. Promote library and information services in all available media to best support the needs of Puerto Rico's users with disabilities.

4. Improve the ability of library personnel to provide excellent library services to the citizens of Puerto Rico by providing continuing education opportunities for librarians and other library support groups to prepare them for library services in the 21st century.

5. Increase the public's use of technology by increasing electronic capacities of libraries and training librarians and the public to effectively use technology.

Each of these needs and the associate goal, LSTA purposes, output and outcome targets, and programs, with approximate time frames, are described in this document.

Stakeholders will continue to meet and monitor the Five Year Plan accomplishment and review it, as necessary. Communicating our program, as discussed in this Five Year Plan, will be part of SLAA and stakeholders responsibility.

MISSION

To provide library and information services to all residents in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to enable individuals to satisfy their educational, informational and cultural needs and interest regardless of their age, location, social or physical condition.

NEEDS AND GOALS

Need #1

Cultural values of the community can be effectively served through a vigorous library program.

Needs Assessment

- Cultural values of our communities are an important aspect of community life especially for younger children and senior citizens. Libraries are responsible in promoting values that are significant to communities.

- There is no significant tradition to use public library services in Puerto Rico. Only 5% of the population uses public library facilities in Puerto Rico.

- At the local level, attending cultural value needs, makes the library the center for all the needs of the community, and this is important way of attracting patrons that will be potential users of our libraries.

Goal

Promotion of library use through a vigorous program that enhances cultural values of a community.

Output target

- By 2004, all public libraries will have in place and running a cultural program link to services provided by the library to its community.

Outcome target

- By 2006, all public libraries will have 25% increase of library users in all ages.

Programs

- Develop partnerships with cultural entities in the community to allow them to use library facilities for all of their needs.

- Develop special projects in each public library in order to attract citizens who have never visited the libraries on a regular basis.

- Expand book and electronic services to target cultural needs of the community.

- Develop good communicating skills through the community to promote activities and services at the library.

Need #2

Promote targeted library and information services to underserved urban and rural communities, including senior citizens and children, from families with incomes below poverty line.

Needs Assessment

- Most schools have a library and most towns have a public library with limited operation hours because of economic constraints. Rural communities are limited, because of accessibility matters, to visit and obtain services from public libraries.

- In this coming school year, 2002-2003, there is a project to maintain open 351 schools for after-school-hour activities. There are 1,544 public schools in Puerto Rico and almost 1,000 school libraries. If the school has a library, it might be

open to the community if its included in the project, but if it does not have a library, these underserved group will continue without library services.

- Services to urban communities are also limited because funding for school and public libraries book collections has been rather limited through out the years. Most libraries have outdated reference materials, and rather deteriorated classic standard books, many acquired in the eighties and middle nineties. Magazine subscriptions are non-existing. Storybooks, that are essential for young readers, are limited and are on such poor conditions because of the constant reuse of the same. All of this affects not only the search for information that is carried out on the library, but it is also a drawback for libraries to attract children, young adults and adults.

- The quality of library services is affected by lack of prepared personnel.

- Most senior citizens in Puerto Rico will not use libraries because of lack of resources and opportunities to fulfill their needs.

- LISP has two (2) mobile libraries that are not being used as such and that many years ago offered library services to rural communities.

Goal

Promotion and enhancement of targeted library services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, socioeconomic backgrounds, and to people with limited functional literary or information skills.

Output target

- By 2007, all public libraries will have one professional librarian in their staff.

- By 2004, the two (2) mobile units will be operational, performing on a regular basis, and providing services to underserved rural communities.

Outcome target

- By 2005, 75% of all public libraries will have 25% of their book collection renovated with updated material.

- By 2004, 75% of all public libraries will develop a dynamic program to promote the use of electronic resources available at the library

- By 2007, 100% of all public school libraries will have at least two (2) computers to be used in developing information skills.

Programs

- One mobile library unit will be prepared with books and computers to serve selected rural communities in one district in Puerto Rico by 2003. By 2004, the second mobile library will be serving selected rural communities in another district.

- Book collection, electronic resources and services to patrons in public libraries will be targeted to make the library pertinent to the community needs.

- Public school libraries will be targeted to promote the acquisition of electronic resources and to develop an information skills program through the use of computers.

- Develop special projects with underserved urban and rural communities targeting children and senior citizens.

Need #3

To promote library and information services in all available media to best support the needs of Puerto Rico's users with disabilities.

Needs Assessment

- Puerto Rico's libraries underserve children and adults with disabilities.

- It is estimated that 761,722 persons in Puerto Rico, or 20% of the population (3,808,610), has impairment as established by ADA[4].

- The Regional Library for the Blind and Physical Impaired serves blind and partially blind adults. As of March 2002, there were 2,363 registered patrons. There are almost 190,430 persons (4% of 761,722) that are considered blind or partially blind. There are 499 students with visual impairment receiving special education.

- Children and young adults at school level are not well served because of the lack of library resources needed to fulfill their needs. At present, there are no statistics of the use of libraries by children and young adults with disabilities.

- Adults and children are not served by public libraries outside of the metropolitan area. Public libraries in San Juan, Carolina, Caguas and Bayamón have bibliographic resources and technology adapted to fulfill their special needs, but not so the rest of the public library system.

Goal

To serve special population in Puerto Rico with their library and information needs enabling schools and public libraries to improve service to this population.

Outcome Target

- By 2004, public school libraries will have library and electronic resources to fill the needs of physically handicapped children.

- By 2005, 75% of the public libraries will have special collection and services for impaired adults and children

Output target

- By 2004, 75 % of all public libraries with technology will have at least one computer program for children and adults with impairments.

- By 2004, 5 public libraries will have a special area with books and technology for children and adults with impairments.

- By 2003, all school libraries with impaired children will have some services targeted for this population. Special arrangements will be made with the Regional Library for the Blind and Physical Impaired to have one or two reading machines and cassettes for those children.

Programs

- This year the LISP have worked an agreement with the University of Puerto Rico's Assisted Technology Division to provide resources and training to staff for the first school library in a school for multiple impaired children. This experience will serve as the basis for developing services to impaired children in all public school libraries.

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[4] Oficina del Procurador de las Personas con Impedimentos. [On line] Address:
http://www.oppi.gobierno.pr/

- To acquire the bibliographic and computer resources to target impaired population.

- Develop special projects in order to attract children and adults with different impairments.

- Promote the resources and services among this population.

Need # 4

Improve the ability of library personnel to provide excellent library services to the citizens of Puerto Rico by providing continuing education opportunities for librarians and other library support groups to prepare for library services in the 21st century.

Needs Assessment

- Teachers without library science preparation are running many school libraries, because of the lack of librarians. Persons without the necessary academic requirements run most public libraries.

- The lack of preparation of people that work in libraries is affecting the quality and quantity of services that are being offered to schools and communities throughout the island.

- To be able to work as a school librarian a person is required to have a bachelor's degree, teacher's license, and 18 graduate university credits in librarianship. However, if there are no librarians available for the job, the Department of Education will hire teachers to work as librarians. These lack the necessary skills to perform in an acceptable manner.

- Most teachers performing, as librarians do not have the time or funds to study the courses required to have the basic library preparation to work as a school librarian.

Goal

Improve quality of services performed by teachers working as librarians by providing these professionals with the opportunities not only to prepared themselves for their jobs, but that they can, on their own continue studying for a master degree in library sciences thus having more professionals that meet the necessary requirements to provide for library services.

Output target

- By 2007, all school libraries will have at least one certified school librarian.

- By 2007, all public libraries will have at least one professional trained librarian.

Outcome target

- By 2007, at least 150 teachers will have completed the requirement for the school librarian certificate.

- By the end of 2007, the percentage of school children that tested below on the Pruebas Puertorriqueñas de Competencias Escolares, will be decreased by 5%.

- By 2007, at least 20 public librarian will have completed basic courses in library science.

Programs

- Analysis of school and public libraries that do not have a certified or professional librarian.

- Conduct a campaign to encourage persons working as librarians to obtain their school librarian certification or their master degree.

- There are four (4) library sciences schools in Puerto Rico located in San Juan, Caguas, Ponce, and San Germán. A selection of forty (40) students, ten for each library school area, will be chosen to study the 18 credits in library science and technology thus training the ones that are working as librarians that are without the necessary preparation.

- Communicating and selection of candidates to be chosen through an evaluation and the need assessment process.

Need # 5

Increase the public's use of technology by increasing electronic capacities of libraries and training librarian and the public to effectively use technology.

Needs Assessment

- The Five Year Plan for 1998-2002, promoted the use of technology in libraries and as part of such effort the SABER (Sistema Automatizado de Bibliotecas Electrónicas en Red) Project was created.

- The LISP will continue its effort to provide libraries with technology and to increase the number of participants in the SABER project.

- This on going project is the only project that allows schools and public libraries to share a database of their own.

- The island wide study conducted on September 2001, shows that 33% of all public school libraries do not have any computer resources available to develop a computer skills.

Target output

- At least 50 public school libraries will be encouraged to enter the SABER project every year.

- By 2004, all public school libraries and all public libraries should have full knowledge of the SABER project.

Target outcome

- By 2007, all public school libraries will have at least two (2) computers.

Goal

To increase the public's use of information technology by increasing electronic capabilities of libraries, promoting technology at libraries and training librarians and the public to effectively use technology

Programs

- To continue the efforts to increase participation of public and school library in the SABER project.

- To continue linking libraries electronically.

- To promote the use and sharing of the database among the participant libraries.

- Develop programs to train librarians and the public in the effective use of technology.

Monitoring and Evaluation Process

All through the Five Year Plan a monitoring and evaluation process will be held at the SLAA level and with the stakeholders participation. Review of the Plan will be an on going process to monitor our levels of accomplishments as described in this Plan.

Sub-grantee evaluation

An evaluation process at the Sub-grantee level is already in place at LSIP. Only one (1) evaluation will be needed for grants requests under $15,000.00. A team will be assembled for grants over that amount as needed.

Evaluation of the success of the activities in meeting identified goals and priorities will be done at the end of the subgrantee project through an accomplishment report and a financial report. SLAA will conduct monitoring procedures annually and will bring to the Department's Auditors any conduct that is misleading or improper in the use of grant funds.

Conclusion

The Puerto Rico public and school libraries will develop and maintain services that provide information empowerment and enrichment for the residents of Puerto Rico with particular emphasis on individuals:

- with diverse cultural and socioeconomic background
- with disabilities

- with limited functional literacy and information skills

- having difficulty using the library

- and from underserved communities including children from families with income below the poverty line

The Library and Information Services Program emphasizes the role libraries play in lifelong learning and affirms the importance of libraries in children's learning and their success in life. Our commitment is to develop, enhance, and provide access to quality library services in Puerto Rico.